

Description

CABLE END CONNECTOR AND METHOD OF ASSEMBLING THE SAME

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a cable end connector and method of assembling a cable into the connector, and more particularly, to a cable end connector having a latching member and a method of assembling the cable into the connector which comprises a step of extending wires of the cable through the latching member prior to terminals of the connector being attached to the wires.

DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

[0002] A cable end connector commonly comprises an insulative housing having a plurality of cavities defined therein, and a plurality of electrical terminals received in the cavities. Each terminal is electrically connected with a corresponding wire of a cable by a particular interconnecting means;

for example, by crimping the wire within a pair of arms formed on the terminal. However, in use, the terminal may occasionally sustain an unexpected pulling force acting on the wire in a direction opposite to the direction of original insertion of the terminal into the corresponding cavity. This can lead to displacement of the terminal or even disengagement of the terminal from within the cavity. Therefore, it is desirable to develop locking systems which can stably secure the terminal in the cavity.

[0003] Recently, several different terminal locking systems directed to the above-described problems have been developed. For instance, US Patent No. 5,489,223 issued to Richard et al. discloses one kind of electrical connector with terminal locking means. The terminal locking means includes a pair of cantilever arms extending from the main body of the terminal in a slantwise manner. When the terminal is inserted into the cavity of the housing, the arm abuts a shoulder formed in the cavity. Thus, the terminal is retained in the cavity by a resisting force generated from the shoulder. However, electrical terminals most commonly used in the electrical connector are made of some kind of relatively soft metallic material, such as copper or copper alloy. A terminal made of such material is

often not hard enough to provide a sufficient resisting force for retaining the terminal in the cavity.

[0004] US Patent Nos. 5,004,436 and Re. 34,539 both disclose another conventional electrical connector having a different locking structure. The connector includes an insulative housing defining cavities each adapted to accommodate a terminal therein, and a latching member adapted to be attached to the housing for securing the terminals in the cavities. The latching member comprises first latching means which can position the latching member at a first position relative to the housing, and second means and third latching means which can position the latching member at a second position relative to the housing. When the latching member is at the second position, a locating portion thereof extends into the cavities thereby locating the terminals in the cavities. In the process of assembling the cable with the connector, the latching member is firstly attached to the housing and located at the first position by the first latching means. Then the terminals with the wires of the cable already connected thereto are extended through openings of the latching member and received in the cavities of the housing. Finally, the latching member is pushed to the second position, and is

secured to the housing by the second and third latching means.

[0005] The above-described locking structure can ensure stable retention of the terminals in the cavities, but it still have some disadvantages. The latching member is located at the first position prior to the terminals being inserted into the cavities of the housing. The configuration of each terminal is rather irregular, which makes it difficult to insert the terminal through the corresponding opening of the latching member. That is, when the terminal having the wire of the cable already connected thereto is inserted into the opening of the latching member, the terminal inevitably interferes with inner walls of the latching member surrounding the opening because of the relatively small dimension of the opening. As a result, the latching member is prone to be prematurely pushed to its second position by the terminal. When this happens, the latching member prevents the terminal from entering the corresponding cavity of the housing, since the cavity has been blocked by the locating portion of the latching member. Therefore, assembly of the connector and the cable cannot be readily achieved.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0006] Accordingly, an object of the present invention is to provide a method for readily assembling a cable into a connector and stably securing terminals in the connector.

[0007] Another object of the present invention is to provide a cable end connector having an improved latching member which facilitates assembly of a cable in the cable end connector.

[0008] In order to fulfill the above objects, an electrical connector in accordance with the present invention comprises an insulative housing having a plurality of cavities, a plurality of electrical terminals adapted to be received in corresponding cavities of the housing, and a latching member having a plurality of channels adapted to accommodate wires of a cable to extend therethrough. A cable comprises a plurality of wires, each wire is electrically connected with a corresponding terminal. A diameter of each channel of the latching member is slightly larger than a diameter of the wire. The latching member has a plurality of latches formed thereon for engaging corresponding blocks formed on the housing, thereby securing the latching member to the housing.

[0009] The assembly of the connector and the cable comprises five main steps. Firstly, the cable end connector and the

cable are provided. Secondly, each of the wires of the cable extends throughout a corresponding channel of the latching member, and a predetermined length of each wire protrudes out from the channel. Thirdly, each of the terminals is attached to one end of a corresponding wire of the cable, and a predetermined distance is remained between the terminals and the latching member. Then, in the fourth step, the terminals are inserted into corresponding cavities of the housing and extend reach their correct positions in the cavities, and the distance between the terminal and the latching member is big enough so that the latching member does not contact the housing in this step. Finally, the latching member is pushed toward the housing with the channels of the latching member being inserted into the cavities of the housing. Simultaneously the latches of the latching member engage with the blocks of the housing. Therefore, the terminals are positioned in the cavities.

[0010] Other objects, advantages and novel features of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

- [0011] FIG. 1 is an exploded view of an electrical connector in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, but showing only one terminal and one wire of a cable thereof;
- [0012] FIG. 2 is a flow chart of a preferred method of assembling the electrical connector of FIG. 1;
- [0013] FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of a latching member of the electrical connector of FIG. 1, taken along line III-III thereof;
- [0014] FIG. 4 is similar to FIG. 3, but showing two wires of the cable of the electrical connector of FIG. 1 extended through channels of the latching member;
- [0015] FIG. 5 is similar to FIG. 4, but showing two terminals of the electrical connector of FIG. 1 attached to the wires of the cable;
- [0016] FIG. 6 is similar to FIG. 5, but showing the terminals inserted into corresponding cavities of a housing of the electrical connector of FIG. 1, with part of the housing being shown in cross-section; and
- [0017] FIG. 7 is similar to FIG. 6, but showing the latching member secured to the housing and locating the terminals in the cavities of the housing.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0018] Referring to FIG. 1, a cable end connector 1 in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention comprises an insulative housing 2, a plurality of electrical terminals 3 adapted to be received in the housing 2, and a latching member 4 adapted to be attached to the housing 2. In FIG. 1, for the purposes of simplifying the drawing, only one terminal 3 is illustrated. A multi-wire cable 5 is adapted to be connected with the terminals 3. The cable 5 comprises a plurality of wires 50. In FIG. 1, for the purposes of simplifying the drawing, only one wire 50 is illustrated. Each wire 50 comprises a core conductor 52.

[0019] Referring to FIGS. 1 and 6, the housing 2 comprises a base portion 20, and a plurality of silos 22 extending from the base portion 20 and arranged in two rows. A plurality of cavities is defined in the housing. Each cavity comprises a broader portion 25 in the base portion 20, and a narrower portion 24 in a corresponding silo 22. A shoulder 26 is thereby formed in the housing 2 where each narrower portion 24 adjoins its corresponding broader portion 25. A pair of aligned blocks 21 is formed on each of opposite main faces of the base portion 20, at an end of the base portion 20 distal from the silos 22. The terminal 3 includes a connecting portion 30, a securing portion 32,

and a mating portion 34. The connecting portion 30 comprises a pair of first clasps 31 and a pair of second clasps 33. The first and second clasps 31, 33 are adapted to crimp the wire 50 when the cable 5 is connected with the terminal 3. The securing portion 32 comprises a pair of opposite first spring arms 36 extending therefrom in a slantwise manner for pressing inner side walls that bound the narrower portion 24 in the corresponding silo 22, and a pair of second spring arms 38 extending upwardly therefrom for abutting the shoulder 26 at the silo 22. The mating portion 34 extends through the narrower portion 24 of the silo 22, for mating with a mating terminal (not shown) inserted therein.

[0020] Referring to FIGS. 1 and 3, the latching member 4 comprises a base plate 40 and two rows of silos 44 extending from the base plate 40. Each silo 44 defines a central channel 48 therethrough. A diameter of each channel 48 is slightly larger than a diameter of each wire 50. A beveled, annular leading portion 49 is formed in the base plate 40 at one end of the channel 48, for facilitating insertion of the wire 50. The latching member 4 further comprises a pair of latches 42 extending from the base plate 40 at each of opposite sides of the rows of silos 44.

The latches 42 are substantially parallel to the silos 44. Each latch 42 has a hook 46 formed at a free end thereof for latching with a corresponding block 21 of the base portion 20 of the housing 2. The hook 46 extends inwardly toward the silos 42 in a direction substantially perpendicular to the silos 44, thereby defining a receiving space 47 for accommodating the block 21.

[0021] Referring to FIG. 2, the assembly of the cable end connector 1 and the cable 5 comprises five main steps. Referring also to FIG. 1, in the first step, the connector 1 and the cable 5 are provided. The connector 1 comprises the housing 2, the terminals 3 adapted to be received in the housing 2, and the latching member 4 adapted to be attached to the housing 2. The cable 5 comprises the plurality of wires 50. Referring also to FIG. 4, in the second step, the wires 50 are extended into the channels 48 of the latching member 4 via the leading portions 49. A predetermined length of each wire 50 protrudes out from an opposite end of its silo 44, with the conductor 52 being exposed at a free end of the wire 50. Referring also to FIG. 5, in the third step, the terminals 3 are attached to the corresponding wires 50. The first clasps 31 of the connecting portion 30 of each terminal 3 are fastened to an

outer insulative jacket of a corresponding wire 50, and the second claps 33 of the connecting portion 30 are fastened to the conductor 52 of the wire 50. Referring also to FIG. 6, in the fourth step, the terminals 3 are inserted into cavities of the housing 2. The mating portion 34 and part of the securing portion 32 of each terminal 3 are located in the narrower portion 24 of a corresponding cavity. The first spring arms 36 press against opposite inner side walls of the housing 2 that bound the narrower portion 24, thereby locating the mating portion 34 in the narrower portion 24. The connecting portion 30 and a remaining part of the securing portion 32 are located in the broader portion 25 of the cavity. The second spring arms 38 abut the shoulder 26, thereby preventing the mating portion 34 from being over-extended out of the silo 22. In this step, the latching member 4 does not contact the housing 2, and the corresponding silo 44 remains a distance from the broader portion 25 of the cavity. This enables the terminal 3 to easily reach its correct position in the cavity. Referring also to FIG. 7, in the fifth step, the latching member 4 is attached to the housing 2. The silos 44 are inserted into the broader portions 25 of the cavities, and the latches 42 snappingly engage with the blocks 21 of

the housing 2. Any displacement of each terminal 3 along the direction of insertion of the corresponding silo 44 is prevented by the second spring arms 38 abutting the shoulder 26. In addition, any displacement of the terminal 3 in a direction opposite to said direction of insertion is prevented by the engagement of the latches 42 with the blocks 21. Thus, the terminals 3 are stably located in the cavities of the housing 2.

[0022] Unlike in conventional art, the wires 50 of the cable 5 are positioned in the latching member 4 prior to connection of the terminals 3 to the wires 50. This obviates the above-described related art difficulty of inserting wires with terminals already attached through channels of a latching member. That is, the assembly process of the present invention removes the related art step of inserting wires with terminals already attached through channels of a latching member. Therefore, the cable 5 can be easily assembled to the housing 2.

[0023] It is to be understood, however, that even though numerous characteristics and advantages of the present invention have been set forth in the foregoing description, together with details of the structure and function of the invention, the disclosure is illustrative only, and changes

may be made in detail, especially in matters of shape, size, and arrangement of parts within the principles of the invention to the full extent indicated by the broad general meaning of the terms in which the appended claims are expressed.